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ABSTRACT

This paper explores problems discussed at various conferences which relate to the formulation and implementation of a national, professional policy concerning the instruction of Latin at all levels of education. Paramount in the discussion are the positions expressed at the Oxford Conference (Ohio, 1968), the Airlie House Conference (1965), and in the Classical Investigation (1924). Basic observations in this report support an audiolingual approach to teaching and strongly condemn grammar-translation methodology. Comments focus on instructional objectives, content, methods, and teacher training. The contribution of structural linguistics to the development of the newer audiolingual theory is recognized in this study. (RL)

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LATIN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A POSITION PAPER

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Latin Language Education: A Position Paper

The Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts voted in the spring of 1968 to examine the status of Latin education in the public schools of the Commonwealth. A sub-committee was established to study the situation and to make recommendations.

One of the recommendations made by the sub-committee was to plan regional conference of an informal nature so as (1) to acquaint teachers of Latin with what is going on nationally in the field of classics, (2) to find out the existing basic problems, and (3) to consider the possibility of in-service or training programs.

Subsequent discussions resulted in the suggestion that a position on Latin be taken by the Advisory Committee to serve as a base for the proposed informal conferences and a possible reconsideration of policy vis-a-vis, Latin. This paper is a reflection of the position taken by the Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages on the matter of Latin Language Education.

Purpose

Latin once held a very strong position in the school curriculum; in recent years that position has diminished significantly. The reasons for the decline are numerous; some are social and others are pedagogical. It is not within the scope of this paper to determine causes, but it does recognize the existence of the phenomenon referred to above and takes a positive stance on the matter of the relevancy and the value of Latin study.

The late and distinguished William Riley Parker in his article "The Case for Latin" articulated ad rem et ad valorem on the matter of Latin studies for American student. His argument is that Latin has an extraordinary relevance to education and that it must be defended on its predicatable outcomes: "The strongest, most defensible reason for studying any foreign language, including Latin, is that such study, which is both progressive experience and a progressive acquisition of a skill, enlarges the pupil's mental horizon by introducing him to a completely new medium of verbal expression and communication and consequently to a new cultural pattern."[1]

We support this position. We also recognize that Latin educators must take a realistic look at the issue of the relevancy of Latin study and the values it contributes to the development and growth of the American child: they must see to it that the instruction is relevant and that these values are an outcome of their teaching.

Those broad predicatable outcomes derived from the study of Latin have been adequately argued elsewhere and are generally accepted by responsible educators.[2] Consider however, that the study of Latin if well taught can become a meaningful key for the student in his continuing efforts to unlock the door to an exciting epoch of human experience and to a great literary and cultural heritage. Teachers of classics have the unique opportunity to offer to their students a unique culture and a unique civilization, cut off by time and space from our own or other contemporary Western cultures, yet very much a part of them all. Latin teachers can offer students an understanding of the earliest, the purest and the most lucid attempts of Western man to become aware of himself and the world around him. All of this can and must be made exciting, meaningful and relevant to our students if the study of Latin is to survive in American public education.

The purpose of this paper is to consider some of the major problems facing teachers of Latin, to draw some conclusions from these difficulties and to suggest some alternatives that might help improve the quality of Latin instruction in the Commonwealth. In this paper we propose to treat the two dimensions of ends and means with a focus on objectives, content and method, and teacher training.

Basic Premises

Before we proceed to a fuller treatment of our subject, we feel it is important to state some basic assumptions underlying the position taken in this discussion. The principles set forth below are considered valid for the modern as well as the ancient languages.

Linguistic Assumptions

1. Language is human, primarily manifested by sound and is symbolically meaningful.
2. Every language has a unique structure systematically organized on several levels.
3. The structure of a language can be observed and described.
4. Each language developed by a culture is adequate to meet the needs of that culture.

Consideration of these linguistic phenomena presents a base and a source of information that cannot be overlooked in devising teaching stragegies in first and second language learning. The second set of assumptions deals with the teaching - learning process.

Pedagogical Assumptions

1. The Aural-Oral aspects of language should not be neglected and should be an integral part of any method.
2. Aural-oral practice should precede the introduction of the reading and writing skills.

3. Literary, cultural and artistic considerations should have a significant place in the order of teaching objectives.
4. Teaching procedures should utilize the data derived from constrastive studies between Latin and English.

To implement these principles we must utilize the best available to us in psychological theory and practice. The nature of language and the psychological facts indicate that language is a skill developed through habit. Habits are formed by purposeful and meaningful repetition. Language, therefore, can best be learned through some kind of purposeful and meaningful repetition.

Objectives

The study of Latin and the study of modern foreign languages, although not identical in every respect, have significant points of similarity. We subscribe to the proposition of William Riley Parker quoted above, that in a larger sense the values and general aims for the study of modern foreign languages are the same for Latin.

However, many of the difficulties that plague Latinists today relate to the more immediate behavioral objectives and the means of arriving at them. There is an obvious and serious split in the ranks of classical educators on questions of immediate means and ends; and it goes back to the Classical Investigation Report of 1924. The Committee on "The Content of the Course in Secondary Latin" made this observation, "We have repeatedly stated our conviction that the

primary immediate objective in the teaching of Latin is the progressive development of power to read and understand Latin- This means training the pupil from the first to get the thought in the Latin order and directly from the Latin itself instead of backwards and indirectly through translation. This definition of reading has long been generally accepted, at least in theory, and has found expression in the reports of various competent bodies".[3]

The Content Committee wanted it specifically understood that to read Latin meant the comprehension of the thought in Latin, whether or not this was accompanied or followed by translation. It was the committee's opinion that the contribution which translation made to the comprehension of Latin as Latin was slight under methods commonly used at that time.[4]

The Committee on "Aims or Objectives in the Teaching of Secondary Latin" supported the development of ability to read and understand Latin; it differed, however, on the means in a very crucial way. It recommended "...the ability to translate Latin into English and English into Latin,"[5] for the attainment of the primary immediate objective.

The failure of the Classical Investigation (1924) and more recently the Airlie House Conference (1965)[6] and to a lesser degree the Oxford Conference. (1968)[7] to resolve this issue, leaves decisions on content and method in an unsettled and unsatisfactory state.

It must be noted that, in the Oxford Conference Report (1968) in a section on methodology, the reference to translation as a valid means of attaining the reading objective is virtually absent. In fact, in a note on the matter this statement appears, "N.B. Since translation is an art requiring a high degree of skill in two languages (in this case Latin and English of course) in the early years of instruction it should be used with caution and care".[8]

We would have welcomed a stronger statement against the use of translation; however, we do note the positive position taken with respect to the teaching of the four basic skills including the development of audio-lingual skills, and the deliberate decision not to mention translation as a means to achieve one of the objectives of Latin study. These are significant contributions in the effort to break the grammar-translation syndrome.

The report gives positive recognition to the contributions made by structural linguistics to the study of classical languages. It stresses the principle that languages should be taught as languages - spoken rather than as decoding exercises -- in silence.

Our position is clear in this matter. We support the Oxford Conference (1968) recommendations on this point; we argue further for the total avoidance of translation as a valid means of attaining the stated objectives.

Method

Methodology is important in any consideration of language education. The axioms we subscribed to above, which we believe are fundamental to language learning, provide us with the guidelines for the preparation of texts, curricula, tests, audio-visual aids and teaching practices. For the sake of clarity we shall refer to these basic principles as an approach. We do consider that the adoption of a given approach should obligate the teacher consistently to carry out that approach in his teaching activities. When we speak of method we understand that it is procedural. It should grow out of the application of the principles of an approach to a teaching situation. The principle that language is primarily spoken would be implemented in the classroom by sufficient opportunity for spoken practice. This may take the form of pattern practice, oral question and answer drills or simple oral reading aloud. We do not subscribe to any one method, but we do insist on the principle of consistency between approach and method. It may be true that there is a consistency between rule and application and grammar-translation: it is equally true that there is no consistency between rule and application and pattern practice or mimicry-memorize--two methods growing out of the linguistic approach.

The Committee on Methods of the Classical Investigation (1924) listed several principles and a number of specific recommendations

with regard to methods of teaching Latin. However, it based its position on certain questionable assumptions Consider the following statement: "The Committee expresses its belief that among the mental traits involved in the study of Latin wherein transfer is most to be expected will be found the following: habits of mental work, tendency to neglect distracting and irrelevant elements, ideals of thoroughness, ideals of accuracy and precision, and proper attitudes towards study as an intellectual achievement".[9]

The methods Committee found itself endorsing not only the aim to read and comprehend Latin as Latin, but also the aim of Latin as a mental discipline. It was small wonder that the Methods Committee could not fully support the Direct Method. In the Committee's view the Direct Method does not exact the kind of mental rigor that the analytical method does.

The Committee did not recommend the Direct Method because it said that, "In the hands of inexperienced or ignorant teachers the attempted use of this method has been found to result in great waste of time with extremely poor results, a glib and showy response on the part of pupils and an alert interest in the classroom often veiling a serious lack of exact knowledge and substantial progress..... The limitation of the aim of the Direct Method renders the attainment of many desirable objectives largely if not wholly impossible".[10]

We recognize that the Committee on Methods faced a very rigid tradition of rule and application through grammar and translation tempered by the notion of mental rigor and consequently we do not get from its report a clear statement of consistent methodology.

The Airlie House Conference Report (1965) recommended an eclectic approach and featured no single method or media. It continued to advocate translation. It also recognized to a substantial degree linguistic science and the newer media. In general, the Conference Report failed to make a strong plea for consistency of approach and method.

The Oxford Conference, Committee I Report (1968) represents a significant breakthrough in Latin language teaching methodology. We support in the main the recommendations set forth on methodology. The reader is urged to consult the recommendations. There is consistency between the commitment to apply structural linguistics to the teaching of Latin and the suggestions offered for oral practice, the development of writing skills, and the presentation of vocabulary.

Content

When the Classical Investigation (1924) spoke of content, it sought to determine the subject matter, which would provide the most effective means for the progressive development of power to read and understand Latin. The Content Committee provided principles for content determination and recommended the reorganization of the existing

content. It recognized that satisfactory results were not being attained when it stated that, "The entire available evidence from various sources seems to be fairly conclusive that pupils studying Latin in the secondary school have not succeeded in developing proper methods of reading Latin as Latin. It is our opinion that the common tendency on the part of the pupils to follow the line of resistance in their attack upon a Latin sentence is largely due to our failure to provide early in the course for sufficient practice with easy reading material and to emphasize the functional rather than the formal aspect of the elements of language".[11]

The principles of content organization advocated by the Content Committee of the Classical Investigation are capsulized in the following statement from the 1924 Report:

> "With respect to the organization of materials and methods of teaching the Committee desires to emphasize the importance of making actual experience rather than formal memory the primary basis of the pupil's learning. In particular this means: (1) that in the learning of vocabulary, inflection and syntax, far greater emphasis be placed on practice in application and less emphasis on the formal study of words, paradigms and rules: (2) that in the organization of materials, especially during the earlier stages, far more time and energy be

> devoted to practice in the use of vocabulary, inflectional forms and principles of syntax, and less time and energy to the formal study of those elements. This second recommendation should mean great reduction in the formal study of inflections and syntax in the first year of Latin study, but a great increase in the relative amount of practice in use.[12]

The Classical Investigation found in its studies of course content that the four-year Latin course as commonly found in the schools was too extensive in amount or too difficult in kind, or both, to provide a suitable medium for the satisfactory attainment of the objectives of Latin study.[13] It recommended that the formal study of some forms and principles in the first year be reduced and in some instances omitted entirely. It emphasized a functional rather than a formal knowledge of forms. Vocabulary, forms and principle of syntax learned in each successive year of the Latin course were to be selected so as to provide for the progressive power to read and understand Latin. It suggested that not less than eighty pages of easy, well graduated and attractive Latin reading material be introduced into the course as soon as possible. The content of the easy reading material was supposed to contribute to the attainment of the historical-cultural objectives. Practice in writing was to be omitted in fourth-year

work. It established a minimum of eighty pages of Caesar, eighty pages of Cicero and one hundred and twenty-eight pages of Virgil as an attainable reading goal in the standard four-year course. In addition to the minimum recommendations teachers were encouraged to choose other Latin authors to attain the historical-cultural objectives.[14]

The desire to provide appropriate content for Latin reading material both in kind and amount was one of the main objectives of the Classical Investigation, and it made the following observation on the matter:

> In my opinion, there is imperative need of reform in the work of the first two years of the course. It is now so hurried that it loses much of its immediate value and affords a poor preparation for further study. The teacher should have time to drill his class of beginners on new forms and constructions until they have been thoroughly learned. adding to the exercises of the book as much as may be necessary; and there should be considerable reading of simple graded Latin--so simple that it can be read with a sense of mastery and so carefully graded as to give an opportunity for full consideration of each new difficulty. This means, of course, simplified or "made" Latin, and doubtless

entails, in the case of most high schools, a reduction in the reading of the canonical works.[15]

While the Classical Investigation made substantial contributions in the matter of content, the more recent Airlie House Conference was less emphatic than the previous investigation on several key issues. The Airlie House Committee on instructional methods and media appraised its own position with the statement that, "It does not seem desirable to support, condone, or condemn one method over another. In helping the pupil to achieve the competencies directed toward developing the ability to read Latin as Latin, the teacher should make use of a variety of texts, methods, and media. An eclectic approach is urged as being most effective."[16]

The Committee did recognize the need for further exploration and evaluation of methods and media for the study and teaching of the classics. for it recommended the appointment of a committee to do this very thing. One result was the follow-up conference at Oxford, Ohio (1968) and the post-conference activities which produced specific types of teaching materials. The latter are included in the published report submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The teaching materials presented exemplify in a concrete way the more orderly and systematic development of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Presented are

specific samples of the following: material intended primarily for oral use; material intended for oral use and reading; material intended for more advanced reading.

The Committee suggested that the material may be used either by the structural or the more traditional method. In addition it made the following observation: "Arrangement of material in this way also permits ready comparison of the two methods and shows that they are closer together than their separate advocates may be prone to admit. Comparison suggests also that the desired product of the Latin classroom--the ability to read Latin--may be achieved by either method. No matter which method is used, the material is adaptable for comprehension, metaphrasing, or translation."[17] Metaphrasing is giving English meaning for the Latin words or phrases in the Latin order.

In implementing the previous recommendation we should insure that there is consistency between means and end. The tests of efficiency and effectiveness should also be considered in any evaluation of the program. The Oxford Report has stated more forcibly than any previous investigation the need to develop systematically the four language skills. We support the positive position of Oxford Report and encourage further research and examination to improve the quality of Latin education in our schools.

Teacher Education

While the Classical Investigation (1924) recognized the importance of teacher training it did not opt to focus in on this issue. Both the Airlie House (1965) and Oxford Conference (1968) however did address themselves to this issue and are beginning to have their impact on the profession. The reader is urged to examine the reports of these two conferences.[18] As a result of one recommendation the American Classical League is presently in the throes of developing sets of Guidelines for Teacher Education Programs in Latin and Professional Standards for Secondary School Teachers of Latin. We support this activity at the National level and encourage the participation of the various state and regional groups such as the Classical Association of New England and that of the Atlantic States.

It is our hope that the design of teacher training programs will be based on clearly formulated training objectives related to the performance expected of a teacher in the classroom. The foreign language teacher education design suggested by Banathy keeps this objective in mind, for it specifies precisely the tasks and expected performance of teachers in the classroom.[19] If, for example, the specific skill that the Latin teacher has to acquire in order to be able to perform in a way expected of him is asking questions in Latin, then the training program should reflect the

development of this skill. If, on the other hand, the training program is characterized by the development of the ability to translate by rule and application and the expected classroom performance is to avoid translation, then the training program must change to meet the expected needs of the teacher.

In conclusion we hope for a definitive statement on teacher education consistent with the recommendations of the profession on such matters as objectives, content, methods, and the use of media.[20]

Related Issues

A. The Place of Latin in the Total Foreign Language Curriculum

There are several issues that have not been treated in this paper, some of which have been adequately discussed elsewhere. For example, the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages puts into proper perspective the relationship between Latin, the modern languages and the curriculum.[21] More recently Professor Harry L. Levy expanded upon this same matter.[22] Utilizing the recommendations of the Northeast Conference Working Committees, he spoke specifically on the matter of "when" to offer Latin in the curriculum. For Professor Levy, "The choice of Latin in grades 10 through 12, or where genuine demand exists, in grade 7 and beyond, must be genuine, obtainable, and sufficiently well advertised to make its selection a realistic possibility.[23] We support this recommendation. It must be added that when the question is raised,

whether to take Latin in grade 7 or a modern foreign language, consideration must be given to such factors as objectives, content, and methods, and competent teachers. If Latin is taught for different reasons and in a way different from modern languages, then the recommendations we make will be different. If Latin is to be offered in grade 7, it should be done as part of a plan to provide instruction in Latin in grades 7-12.

Can the election of Latin in addition to a modern foreign language be justified in the curriculum ? It would be difficult to justify the same degree of learning experience in all fields for all students. Some have talents and interests in the sciences and mathematics, others are not so inclined and are motivated to spend their time in the arts, or in languages. A genuine opportunity should be provided for those whose talents and interests lie in humanistic studies to pursue them to a greater than minimal degree. Such individuals should be encouraged to study both a modern and an ancient language.

B. Latin Policy

The Classical Investigation almost a half century ago adopted a strong position for the improvement of Latin studies. Unfortunately many of its recommendations and observations still lie dormant in the faded folds of the report. More recently the Airlie House Conference which sought to identify the most fundamental

problems facing classical education and the Oxford Conference which attempted to organize an attack on some of these problems have also made significant contributions in the field of Latin education.

Latin teachers and all other interested people must become familiar with the findings of these studies. They are the most important documents of Latin policy available to teachers of Latin. Although this paper does not subscribe to every position taken in these reports, they are nevertheless statements of considerable influence and form the nucleus of current Latin policy. They must be studied, analyzed and discussed now by all Latinists who are concerned about the status of Latin in the schools.

While we recognize the contributions made by individuals on behalf of the profession, it is only through a concerted effort that professional policy will be formulated and implemented. The national, regional and state professional associations must be supported and a national organization must be established to speak for the profession.[24]

Footnotes

[1]William Riley Parker, "The Case for Latin," The Classical Journal, LXX, No. 1 (October, 1964), 2.

[2]Parker, "The Case for Latin," p. 15.

[3]The Classical Investigation, Part I, Princeton University Press (New Jersey, 1924), pp. 93-94.

[4]The Classical Investigation, p. 83.

[5]The Classical Investigation, p. 32.

[6]John F. Latimer, Planning Conference to Examine the Role of Classical Studies in American Education and to Make Recommendations for Needed Research and Development, Cooperative Research Project No. V-005, The George Washington University (Washington, 1965) - hereafter called The Airlie House Conference.

[7]John F. Latimer, A Report to the National Endowment for the Humanities: The Oxford Conference and Related Activities (Washington, D. C. 1968).

[8]Latimer, The Oxford Conference, p. 15.

[9]The Classical Investigation, p. 188.

[10]The Classical Investigation, p. 235.

[11]The Classical Investigation, p. 96.

[12]From the Report of the Committee on Classical Languages of the Commission of the National Education Association for the Reorganization of Secondary Education quoted in, The Classical Investigation, p. 96.

[13]The Classical Investigation, p. 90.

[14]The Classical Investigation, pp. 123-124.

[15]J. C. Kirtland, "High-School Latin and College Entrance Requirements: A Reply," The Classical Journal, X, (February, 1915), p. 232. quoted in The Classical Investigation, p. 163.

[16]Latimer, The Airlie House Conference, p. 43.

[17]Latimer, The Oxford Conference, p. 28.

[18]See Also Harriet S. Norton, "Teacher Training Programs," The Classical World, LXI, No. 1 (September, 1968), pp. 7-8.

[19]Bela H. Banathy, "The Design of Foreign Language Teacher Education," The Modern Language Journal. LII, No. 8 (December, 1968), pp. 490-500.

[20]While this paper has not concerned itself with the use of media such as the language laboratory, it does support the notion that such use can be profitable to develop skill in both the spoken and the written language.

See Donald W. Prakker, "The Use of the Language Laboratory,"

a paper read at the 56th Annual Meeting of CAAS, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, April 26-27, 1963 and appearing in The Classical World, LVII, No. 7 (April, 1964), pp. 301-303.

[21]F. D. Eddy (ed.), The Language Learner, Reports of the Working Committee, 1959 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, pp. 57-58. See also G. F. Jones (ed.), Foreign Languages in the Secondary School, Reports of the Working Committee, 1964 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, pp. 19-36.

[22]Harry L. Levy, "The Place of Latin in the Total Foreign Language Curriculum," Foreign Language Annals, I (October, 1967), pp. 13-17. See also John F. Latimer and Annette H. Eaton, "Latin in Secondary Schools: A Six-Year Program," Foreign Language Annals, I (May, 1968), pp. 295-300.

[23]Levy, "The Place of Latin in the Total Foreign Language Curriculum," Foreign Language Annals, I (October, 1967), p. 15.

[24]See Norman T. Pratt, "Our Successes and Failures: The Phoenix Bird," The Classical World, LXI, No. 1 (September, 1968), pp. 3-5.